

Bank of England

BANK OF ENGLAND ARCHIVE: ACCESS TO RECORDS

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Freedom of Information rules mean that, as a public authority, the Bank of England is obliged to disclose certain types of information, both proactively and on request. See further details on [Freedom of Information](#) at the Bank of England.

TRANSFER OF MATERIAL TO THE BANK'S ARCHIVE

Although the Bank of England's records are not covered by the Public Records Act, material in the Archive has, in general, been freely accessible to the public after a period of 30 years. This matched the '30-year rule' under which Government records were transferred to The National Archives. The Constitutional Reform and Government Act 2010 amended the Public Records Act by reducing the transfer period from 30 to 20 years. As a public authority subject to Freedom of Information the Bank has followed this requirement. In line with the policy adopted by The National Archives, the Bank has completed a ten-year programme of accelerated releases so that from 2023, records that are 20 years old will be available in the Archive.

ACCESS TO ARCHIVE MATERIAL

Approximately three-quarters of all the files held in the Bank's Archive are already open to the public for research. It is however necessary to keep some material closed for longer than the usual transfer period. There are a number of reasons why files may be closed, the main ones being:

Personal information: the Bank has a statutory obligation to comply with Data Protection legislation in its processing of personal information. Archive files containing such information may be closed for a period of up to 100 years.

Customer business: some files in the Archive contain information about the banking business of the Bank and this means that they may be closed for up to 100 years. However in some cases, for instance where the customers are other central banks, agreements are in place for files to be opened earlier, typically after 30 years.

Security: files may be closed where they contain information that has a bearing on the security of the Bank, its premises, or its operations, for example, banknote printing. In rare instances these records may be closed for an indefinite period.

Statutory prohibitions: in some cases information may be subject to statutory restrictions on disclosure and related offences (eg supervisory information under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000).

Information given in confidence: if information is obtained under a specific undertaking of confidentiality it cannot be released without consent.